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RE:SOURCE

The Newsletter of the Municipal Excellence Network

ISSUE #2

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In This Issue

Network Newsletter

Municipal Practices

Municipally Excellent
Folks

Municipal Excellence
Training

Minister's Awards

A Network newsletter, news for networking

The Municipal Excellence Network is a powerful resource built through a collaborative partnership between Alberta municipalities and Alberta Municipal Affairs. It is founded upon the three cornerstones of people, knowledge

assets and information technology, and serves municipalities by facilitating knowledge transfer and promoting excellence in local government.

Re: source is the newsletter of the Municipal Excellence Network.

Practices and more practices

The ME Network entered Phase 3 of its development during 2003. In Phases 1 and 2, the partners worked together to build the MEnet Web site and collect local government practices in the core business processes of governance, administration, finance and human resources. The Web site opened June 24, 2002 with a database of 133 practices. That number has since grown to 186 with another 31 in the works – ample evidence that municipal folks are catching on, pitching in, and taking advantage of this great resource! As Phase 3 continues, the ME stakeholders and team will develop criteria and collect practices for municipal services.

of all sizes and types across the province. The task will be to identify criteria for practices in municipal services such as transportation, recreation, infrastructure and waste and water management. And of course, just like everyone else involved in the Network, the workshop participants will be asked to contribute their own practices to the ever-growing MEnet database.

As we begin collecting practices in the area of municipal services, we'll keep looking for more in the areas we covered during Phase 1 and Phase 2. So whatever the topic, please don't hesitate to share something that has worked for you. Go to www.menet.ab.ca, follow the instructions, and make your contribution to the Network. If you currently have nothing to submit, check out the Web site anyway – you will probably find something you can use. ***It will cost you nothing except some well-invested time!***

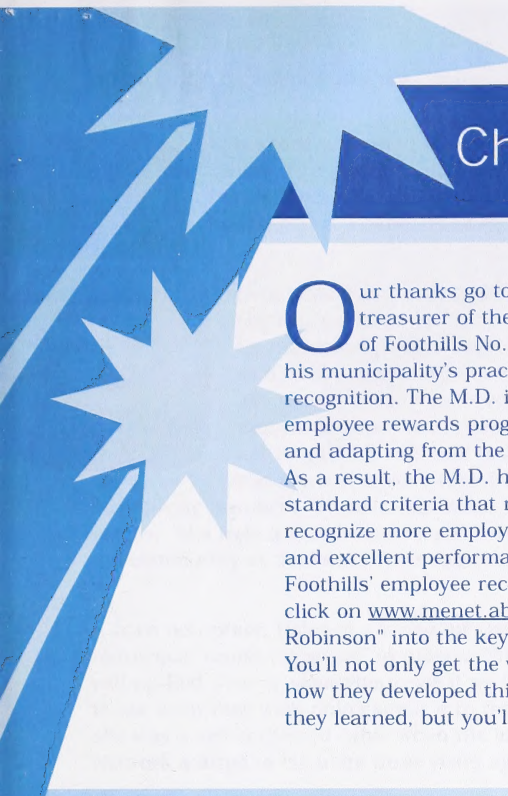
A key step in this process will be the ***expert panel sessions*** slated for October 27th to 31st, 2003, and then again from November 24th to 28th, 2003. These are facilitated workshops with stakeholders from municipalities

**Municipal
Excellence**
network

Municipalities sharing knowledge to excel

WWW.MENET.AB.CA

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Check out these new practices

Our thanks go to William Robinson, treasurer of the Municipal District of Foothills No. 31, for submitting his municipality's practice for employee recognition. The M.D. improved its existing employee rewards program by borrowing and adapting from the City of Calgary's. As a result, the M.D. has been able to set standard criteria that make it easier to recognize more employees for long service and excellent performance. For details on Foothills' employee recognition program, click on www.menet.ab.ca and type "William Robinson" into the keyword search window. You'll not only get the whole story about how they developed this program and what they learned, but you'll be able to see their

recognition criteria, promotional brochure, nomination form and thank you card.

We also have Joel DeBlock of the City of St. Albert to thank for submitting their natural gas forecasting model. The unpredictability of energy prices drove St. Albert to develop a budgeting tool for forecasting natural gas costs based on market prices and amounts consumed, as opposed to projections based simply on past expenditures. They gathered data from a number of sources and created an in-house process using existing software that has increased budget planning accuracy. For more on this, click on the link above and type "natural gas forecasting" into the search window.

What's a "Listserv"?

Are you one of those people who value the resources in the MEnet database but often forget to look there when you're searching for solutions to problems?

The MEnet listserv is just what you need. It's a subscription service that will automatically notify you via email when a new practice gets added to the database. You can choose which corporate functions (administration, governance, human resource, finance and municipal services) you wish to be kept updated on. You can also choose to have **Re:Source**, the Network newsletter, sent to you automatically via email.

The listserv is a great reminder that there's a world of knowledge at your fingertips in the MEnet Web site. Subscribe now, it's easy! Just:

- Click on this link www.menet.ab.ca
- Place the cursor over the "resource materials" tab on the left side of the MEnet home page. This will bring up a menu with "Listserv" at the bottom; click on the "Listserv" tab.
- Follow the simple instructions on the Listserv page to sign up.

Municipally Excellent Folks

As we've said, one of the three cornerstones of the Municipal Excellence Network is people. Nowadays, the term "network" has technological connotations, and information

technology is another ME Network cornerstone. But first and foremost it's a network of people sharing knowledge and supporting each other in their quest for excellence.

This space is devoted to the people who constitute the Municipal Excellence Network. In this issue we meet Helen Rice, Alderman for the City of Grande Prairie.

Helen has been serving her community on city council since 1979. She has a passion for municipal politics because she sees it as a "real opportunity to make a difference." Helen values being in municipal government because it allows her to interact with and respond to voters who are at the same time fellow

community members, friends, neighbours and business people. She feels it's easiest to respond to the needs of the community at the local government level.

A born networker, Helen is a long-time user of the municipal "jungle telegraph" in Alberta: "You know, we'd call up Red Deer or somewhere else if we had a problem to see what they were doing about it in their area." So she was a self-confessed cynic when the idea of a formal Network started to circulate three years ago. "I thought

we didn't really need something like that because we'd been doing it informally for years."

But now that she's seen the advantages of the Network she's a fervent believer. With a framework for sharing municipal practices and a well-organized database on the MEnet Web site where people can easily access this great wealth of knowledge, she says, "the possibilities are endless."

Helen is a jury member for the Minister's Awards for Municipal Excellence and even there she notes the beneficial effects of knowledge sharing. "I see light bulbs going on over peoples' heads as we read the awards submissions. They're thinking 'I can take this idea back to my community and make it work there.'"

Actually, Helen is kind of a light bulb in her own way. She radiates energy and inspiration, and her commitment to the knowledge sharing values of the Municipal Excellence Network is a "shining" example for us all.

More than practices — training, Web site, spreading the word

We're now ready to add more resources to the Network, the first priority being **training** that supports your commitment to continuous improvement. We'll be offering a one-day course on how to identify opportunities for improvement in your organization and once you've done that, how to effect positive change. Regional training dates are proposed for February and March 2004 and we'll let you know once those dates are set.

As part of our own commitment to continuous improvement, we'll keep enhancing the **Web site**. Phase 2 saw the major addition of the Listserv (see below) and over the next year we'll be fine tuning the site. Working with our vendors Clarity.ca Solutions and Fujitsu Consulting, we plan to improve things such as the practice matrix (making it easier to browse) and cleaning up some of the technical glitches that always accompany the opening of a new site.

The Municipal Excellence team has travelled the length and breadth of the province to talk to participants at municipal association zone meetings about the Network and its benefits. Once again in

Phase 3, we would be glad to attend your meetings to introduce you to the Network, the Web site, and all the great resources available. We already have a number of **presentations** planned for the coming months:

- Sept 24 - Western Cities Conference (Edmonton)
- Sept 25 - AUMA Tradeshow (Calgary)
- Sept 25 - AUMA Small Communities Committee Meeting (Calgary),
- Sept 26 - Minister's Awards Presentation #1 @ AUMA convention (Calgary),
- Nov 4 - Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) Symposium on Municipal Priority Setting (Ottawa), and
- Nov 26 - Minister's Awards Presentation #2 @ AAMD&C convention (Edmonton).

Contact us through the numbers or addresses listed in the masthead and we'll book a time to come and see you.



The Minister's Awards for Municipal Excellence

Last fall, Alberta Municipal Affairs Minister Guy Boutilier presented the first annual Minister's Awards for Municipal Excellence. The awards honour leading practices by Alberta municipalities that demonstrate innovation, partnership and outstanding achievement. Here are the award recipients and honourable mentions for 2003.

The Innovation Award for 2003 goes to the City of Lethbridge's new three-year operating budget.

This supports the City's strategic planning cycle through a unique, three-year approach that allows council to plan over a time period consistent with its elected term of office. Emerging from careful consultation and piloting, the new process has yielded great savings in time spent by both Council and city managers on budget preparation and review. It has also increased capacity for other important work such as unit business plans and corporate strategic planning.

The Outstanding Achievement Award goes to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo for its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). The municipality is at risk for major disasters and needed an EOC that could respond by drawing on regional capacity instead of importing help from central Alberta. The Wood Buffalo EOC represents the best in both process and product. Good consultation led to well-conceived plans, sound preparation and training led to healthy information sharing, and all of this has resulted in high level operational effectiveness.

The Partnership Award goes to the joint use administration building constructed by the Municipal District of Foothills No. 31 and the Town of High River. Each municipality needed additional office and meeting space, yet could not justify separate new buildings. The partners ran a public input process that gained solid support from their citizens, then

designed and constructed a new building that opened in High River last October. The municipalities maintain separate office areas but share the council chamber and public meeting spaces, a solution that meets the needs of both partners at 65 per cent of the cost of separate facilities.

Honourable Mention – Innovation

The Northeast Region Community Awareness Emergency Response Association consists of the City of Fort Saskatchewan; Sturgeon, Strathcona and Lamont counties; and the towns of Bruderheim, Gibbons, Morinville and Redwater. Working through a public-private partnership, these municipalities developed a technologically-advanced community notification system that provides information about actual or potential public emergencies.

Honourable Mention – Outstanding Achievement

Strathcona County conducted a rigorous study on the long-term viability of agriculture within its boundaries. This study places significant value on a balanced relationship between the urban and rural sectors of the community, which is particularly important given the continuing urban development within the County.

Honourable Mention – Partnership

The Town of Coaldale, the City of Lethbridge and the County of Lethbridge jointly created a sustainable and permanent new delivery system for treated water in the region. This has resulted in improved economic development and public health for these municipalities.

Congratulations to all these municipalities for their achievements and thank you to all of the municipalities that made submissions. It's not too early to begin thinking about which practice (or practices) your municipality can submit for the 2004 Awards. For information on the submission process go to www.menet.ab.ca and click on "minister's awards."

Re:source is published by the Municipal Excellence Network and Alberta Municipal Affairs.
Please forward your comments to:

Michael Stansberry, Advisor
Phone: (780) 422-8908
michael.stansberry@gov.ab.ca

Alberta Municipal Affairs
17th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4



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